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Contact: Carol Guthrie
(202) 224-4515

**SENATE MUST BACK BENEFITS FOR SENIORS,
DISABLED VETERANS, JOBLESS AMERICANS
IN FINANCE COMMITTEE STIMULUS PACKAGE**

*85 year-old retiree, disabled veterans advocate, labor leader
stand in support of Senate bill at news conference today*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), and Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) today called on their colleagues in the Senate to pass the Finance Committee’s economic stimulus package to deliver benefits to 20 million seniors, 250,000 disabled veterans, and unemployed workers. Joined by Mattie Carvon, an 85 year-old retiree living only on Social Security benefits, and by advocates from the Disabled Veterans of America and the DC Labor Council, the Senators stressed the importance of including these low-income Americans who would not receive benefits under the House-passed package. A vote is expected on the Finance Committee bill this Wednesday, February 6.

“The vote the Senate will take on the Finance-passed stimulus bill is not a vote about politics. It’s a vote about people: 20 million seniors, 250,000 disabled veterans, millions of Americans who are exhausting their unemployment benefits,” said Baucus, at the event this morning. **“We have counted on seniors and soldiers and workers to make America great. Now they’re counting on us. They need to be part of economic recovery. Only the Senate bill, only the Finance Committee’s economic package, will remember these people.”**

“The Senate package is the quickest, most effective way to boost consumer spending, encourage business investment, create jobs and avoid an economic downturn,” said Stabenow. **“We need to extend unemployment insurance, not only because it’s the right thing to do, but because it is the most effective way to boost the economy, while giving individuals more time to search for a job in a difficult market.”**

“With job loss figures reaching 18,000 for January 2008, now is not the time to sacrifice high-quality, high-paying jobs by letting the clock run out on critical tax incentives that will pump money back in to our economy this year,” said Cantwell. **“The Finance Committee package will prevent the loss of billions of investment dollars and will enable companies to move forward with renewable energy investments in wind and solar that are about to be placed on hold. We have to act quickly, for seniors, disabled veterans, consumers, and businesses. The quickest way to get a good, effective stimulus package to the president’s desk is to vote for the Finance Committee bill and move it quickly through conference.”**

Eighty-five year old Mattie Carvon, a senior who must cover all expenses – including treatment for diabetes – with only her Social Security income, said that she would spend a \$500 rebate on food and medicine. Jos Williams of the AFL-CIO said that extended unemployment benefits will be vital for workers having a difficult time finding jobs in the slow economy. Joe Violante, legislative director of Disabled Veterans of America, said that the nation’s veterans have not been forgotten in the Finance Committee plan.

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The Senate Finance Committee voted 14-7 last week to approve Baucus's economic stimulus package, which will boost the American economy with \$500 rebates for every American reporting \$3,000 in wages, Social Security income, or net self-employment income on a 2007 tax return. That rebate will double for married taxpayers filing jointly, and families will receive an additional \$300 for every qualifying child under age 17. The benefit will phase out for Americans making more than \$150,000 per year.

The Finance plan extends Federal unemployment insurance benefits for 13 weeks in all states through December 2008, and provides for an additional 13 weeks of benefits in states meeting certain criteria for high unemployment. It also includes additional business tax relief provisions that will allow companies losing money in the economic downturn to access quick cash for payroll and expenses.

More details of the Finance Committee's economic stimulus package are available at <http://www.finance.senate.gov/sitepages/legislation.htm>.

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